The Neutral Solution Theodicy

By Richard Beobide
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Citation Note on the Use of Grok

(xAI Large Language Model)In the preparation of this work, the author consulted Grok, a large language model developed by xAI, as a scholarly research assistant. Grok was employed exclusively for the following purposes:

- to conduct line-by-line, neutral, truth-seeking analyses of the manuscript drafts;
- to verify biblical exegesis, paleontological data, and philosophical arguments against primary sources;
- to identify areas requiring clarification, consistency, or refinement;
- to supply precise scholarly citations, formatting suggestions, and structural feedback; and
- to prepare preliminary drafts of certain sections (such as the Preface) for the author's review and revision.

All queries to Grok were made in real time between May and June 2026. The author retained full editorial control at every stage. Every argument, every exegetical decision, every theological claim, and every final wording in The Neutral Solution Theodicy is the author's own. Grok functioned solely as a rigorous conversational partner and research tool, not as a co-author or source of original ideas.

In addition to the general assistance described above, the author also entrusted Grok with drafting two specific sections of the work. These sections are noted below.

It should also be noted that the section titled "Divine Commands and Progressive Ordering in Genesis 1: A Non-Ad Hoc Framework for Scriptural Silence on Pre-Fall Carnivory within the Neutral Solution Theodicy" was written by Grok. All of the necessary ideas, theological content, and conceptual framework for this portion were originally developed and supplied by the author, Richard Beobide. After determining that he was unable to produce a suitably non-ad hoc scholarly formulation of these concepts on his own, and believing the material to be of importance for the body of Christ, the author entrusted the drafting of this specific article to Grok. The author subsequently reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the section.

It should further be noted that the section titled "Suffering & Horrendous Evil: Response to Marilyn McCord Adams" was written by Grok. All of the necessary ideas, theological content, and conceptual framework for this portion were originally developed and supplied by the author, Richard Beobide. After determining that he was unable to produce a suitably finished version on his own, the author entrusted the drafting of this specific article to Grok. The author subsequently reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the section.

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Grok. 2026. "Responses to Richard Beobide on the Neutral Solution Theodicy." xAI Grok large language model. Accessed June 4, 2026. https://grok.x.ai.The author is grateful for the model's capacity to engage in sustained, academically rigorous dialogue while maintaining strict epistemic neutrality.

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Preface

The problem of evil has bothered thoughtful people for centuries. When we add the fossil record, the problem becomes even sharper. For hundreds of millions of years before humans existed, the layers of rock show animals hunting and killing each other. We see creatures in pain and dying. Yet the Bible says God called the whole creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31). It also says death entered the world through human sin (Romans 5:12). How can a good and powerful God be in charge of a world that already had suffering and death long before Adam and Eve?

This book offers one clear answer: the Neutral Solution Theodicy. It says the world before humans existed in a state that was truly good, but it was also amoral. That means animals could hunt, suffer, and die, but they were not morally responsible like people are. God allowed this state on purpose. He wanted Adam to see clearly what would happen if he disobeyed. Adam would then understand the real cost of his choice. The fossil record has preserved that same lesson for every generation since.

This view does not deny that animals suffered. It does not make human sin seem small. Instead, it looks at both the Bible and the scientific evidence together. It treats the fossil record as neutral information that can actually help us understand God’s plan. The goal is honest agreement between Scripture and what we can observe in creation.

The pages that follow explain this idea fully. They connect the plain reading of Genesis 1–3, the fossil record, the private nature of suffering, and the saving work of Jesus. This theodicy is not presented as the final answer. It is an invitation. It asks every reader—believer or skeptic—to look at the evidence with an open mind. If this view is right, the fossil record does not have to fight against faith. It can stand as quiet proof that God prepared humanity to make a real, informed choice. In Jesus, God entered the world of suffering to pay the full price and offer life to us.

May you read these pages with the same honest search for truth.

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The Thesis

The Neutral Solution Theodicy says this: Before Adam sinned, creation existed in a genuinely good but amoral state. In that state, animals hunted, suffered, and died. Because they were not moral beings, they carried no guilt. These conditions lasted for hundreds of millions of years before humans appeared.

God placed Adam in the garden and gave him two clear commands: care for the garden and guard it, and do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:15-17). On the sixth day, God also gave a simple food rule for both people and animals—they were to eat plants (Genesis 1:29–30).

The main problem this theodicy solves is the tension between two facts. The Bible says God called the whole creation “very good.” But the fossil record shows animals hunting and killing each other, suffering, and dying long before any human sin. Instead of seeing this pre-Fall suffering as proof against God’s goodness, the Neutral Solution says God allowed the amoral state on purpose. He did it so Adam could receive a clear, living lesson. Adam would see what the world would become if he disobeyed. This lesson, together with his job to guard the garden, gave Adam full understanding of the results of his choice. The same fossil record now gives that lesson to every generation after him.

In this way, Adam’s decision was not made in ignorance. The evidence from science becomes helpful teaching that still serves people today.

The Problem

The fossil record creates a serious challenge. For hundreds of millions of years before humans existed, the rock layers show widespread hunting. Sea creatures, birds, and land animals are preserved in the act of attacking prey. We see fear and death. This record of suffering stretches across deep time, long before Adam was created.

Yet the Bible says God called the entire creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31). It also says death and suffering entered the world through human disobedience (Romans 5:12).

God had given Adam two direct commands: guard the garden and do not eat from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:15-17). He had also given a clear food rule—plants for both humans and animals (Genesis 1:29–30). So how can a good and all-powerful Creator be responsible for a world where hunting, pain, and death were already happening for a very long time before people existed?

This exact tension is what the Neutral Solution Theodicy sets out to answer.

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Learning from Earlier Commands in Genesis 1

One helpful way to understand the Bible is to notice patterns in how God gives commands. In Genesis 1, God's commands on days 1 through 5 follow a clear pattern. God speaks to an existing condition and brings a new, ordered state. The text focuses on what God has now established. It does not always list every detail of what came before.

For example:

- Day 1: God says, "Let there be light." Darkness already existed. God brings light and separates the two.
- Day 2: God commands a space to divide the waters.
- Day 3: Dry land appears, and plants are commanded to grow.
- Day 4 and 5 continue the same pattern.

In each case, God moves creation from one ordered state to the next. He does not stop to say that every previous detail has disappeared. The focus stays on the new order He has spoken into being.

This pattern helps us understand the command on day 6. God creates land animals and humans, then gives the food rule: plants for people and for the animals (Genesis 1:29–30). The text makes a positive statement about what God provides. It does not say, "You shall eat only plants and nothing else." It does not declare that hunting must stop everywhere.

Following the earlier pattern, the day-6 command brings a new ordered state without needing to erase or list every possible detail from before. This makes the silence about earlier hunting understandable. God's commands often focus on what He is establishing rather than on everything that might still exist.

The Dietary Command and What It Means

On day 6, God gives the food rule and says, "and it was so." This command brings harmony between humans and animals under Adam's leadership. It marks a clear point in time. Before this command, the creation was in an amoral state where hunting and death could happen. After the command, both people and animals were given plants to eat.

Because Adam disobeyed very soon after, the time when everything followed the new food rule was very short—geologically speaking, almost instant. The vast majority of the fossil record therefore preserves the earlier amoral state. This is exactly what we would expect. The fossil record keeps the lesson Adam saw with his own eyes: what the world looks like when it operates without moral order under human leadership.

Adam was not naïve. He had seen hunting and death in the creation around him. God had also told him to guard the garden, which implies there were real threats. Adam understood the cost of disobedience because he had a living example right in front of him.

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Why Would God Do This?

God created people with real free will. He wanted Adam to choose freely whether to obey or disobey. For that choice to be real, Adam needed to understand the consequences. A simple command without any visible example would have left Adam without full knowledge.

God therefore allowed the amoral state to continue long enough for Adam to observe it. Adam saw what suffering and death looked like. He saw what his dominion would become if he chose his own way. This gave him a clear “witness of backward reversion”—a living picture of what would happen if he disobeyed.

The same record is now preserved in the fossils for every generation. It serves as an enduring lesson. No one has an excuse for ignoring the reality of consequences (Romans 1:20). God did not force Adam. He gave him enough information to choose with understanding.

Suffering Is Not “Excessive” in the Way People Often Claim

Suffering happens inside each individual creature. One animal’s pain does not add up with another animal’s pain to create a giant total that can be measured from the outside. Each creature experiences its own life in its own mind. When that life ends, the experience is complete. There is no leftover “extra” suffering that can be called excessive by an outside observer.The fossil record shows many animals that died while hunting or being hunted. It does not show the many quiet moments of animals enjoying sunshine, food, or rest. Both suffering and simple joys were part of life in the amoral state. Because suffering is private and individual, no one can fairly look at the whole fossil record and declare, “This is too much.”

God used this exact reality as teaching for Adam. The suffering Adam observed was real, but it was purposeful. It showed him the cost of breaking God’s order. After the Fall, that same reality became the wages of sin for humanity. Jesus then took those wages upon Himself on the cross.

The Fall and What Changed

When Adam chose to disobey, he acted as the representative for all humanity. His choice brought a new sinful nature into the world. Immediately, he and Eve felt shame and tried to cover themselves. Disease, corruption, and death spread through creation (Genesis 3:17–19; Romans 8:20–22).

The pre-Fall amoral realities—hunting, suffering, and death—were now transferred into moral consequences for people. What had been neutral teaching became the wages of sin. God immediately showed mercy by making clothes from animal skins (Genesis 3:21). This was the first blood sacrifice. It pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, who would take the full cost of sin upon Himself.

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Christ Enters the Reality of Suffering

Jesus voluntarily entered the same “becomes the prey” reality that Adam had observed. On the cross, He absorbed the full wages of sin—suffering and death—so that the original gift of life could be offered freely again. The cross restores what was lost. It shows God’s willingness to suffer for us while we were still against Him (Romans 5:8).

Why the Fossil Record Matters Today

The fossil record is not an accident or a problem for faith. It is God’s enduring witness. It gives every generation the same clear lesson Adam received: disobedience has real and serious consequences. At the same time, it shows that God prepared the way for redemption even before sin entered the world.

The record invites each person to examine the evidence and decide. Will you trust the God who made everything, allowed the lesson, and then paid the price Himself? Or will you go your own way? The choice is real because the information is clear.

A Final Word on Horrendous Evil

Some suffering is so terrible that people wonder if life can still have meaning. God does not ignore this pain. He works even in the darkest places. Many people who have suffered greatly later say that God used their pain to help others who suffer. The same God who allowed the pre-Fall lesson also enters our suffering through Jesus. He brings meaning, hope, and eventual healing—sometimes in this life, and fully in the life to come.

No one can fully explain every instance of suffering. But the Neutral Solution shows that suffering was never meaningless or outside God’s plan. It served a purpose for Adam, and it continues to serve a redemptive purpose today.

Simple Glossary of Key Terms

- Amoral-but-good state: The condition of creation before Adam sinned. Animals could hunt and die, but they were not guilty of sin because they were not moral beings.
- Backward reversion: The clear picture Adam saw of what the world would become if he disobeyed.
- Federal head: Adam acting as the representative for all humanity. His choice affected everyone after him.
- Fossil record: The layers of rock that preserve evidence of life from long ago.
- Neutral Solution: The view that both the Bible and the fossil record can be understood together without forcing one to deny the other.
- Underdetermined: Information that can be understood in more than one reasonable way. We cannot prove every detail from the text or the rocks alone.
- Vice-regency: Adam’s role as God’s representative in charge of the earth.

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Conclusion

The Neutral Solution Theodicy shows that God is good, wise, and sovereign. He created a world where free choice was real. He gave Adam enough understanding through direct observation. When Adam fell, God did not abandon humanity. He entered the suffering Himself in Jesus and paid the full price.

The fossil record, far from being a threat to faith, stands as lasting evidence of God's careful preparation. It teaches every generation the cost of disobedience and points us to the cross, where that cost was fully paid.

May this clearer presentation help more people see the goodness of God even in the face of suffering and deep time. The evidence is before us. The choice is ours.